

Mine

Vol 2 No 3

March 1971

Good news. If things work right there won't be any streaks or ink spots on this newsletter. I gave my cranky mimeo machine a dirty look and a cleaning. I also found out I was doing a couple of things wrong.

If my trusty contributors contribute in time, I might have 4 special articles by press time. I'll hold off mentioning them until they arrive. As you probably realize I type the bulk of this newsletter around the first of the month. Late mail and ideas are typed the week-end before the 15th of the month and then the newsletter is mailed. This is still a one-man operation and in order to keep postage down, I limit myself to news and info crammed into 3-4 sheets so I can send this first class for 6¢. This issue may be larger.

I am not fancy with pictures, designs, etc. but I hope I serve a purpose. I now have 80 subscribers and still have enough money for several more issues.

CORRECT TITLES: I dwelled into this problem last issue, Bob Joseph discussed this in his Feb. issue of Stay Tuned, and I am going to mention it again. PLEASE be careful about listing your programs. There is no point in listing a program unless you have listened to enough of the program to get the correct information. List the correct title. If the correct title of a Suspense program is Door of Gold don't list it as Golden Door. Bruce Ruggles suggests that when listing series use the titles in Radio's Golden Age. At least use the series title given by the announcer when introducing the program. It's confusing to find "Sergeant Preston" listed instead of "Challenge of the Yukon" which was the proper name of the show. SCOO use the correct title mentioned by the announcer, check date with day of program if known (this could eliminate a lot of wrong dates), list guest stars, sponsor, network, whether opening or closing are missing, quality. Remember if no title is given mention the action and names given in about the first five minutes of the program.

CONFUSING PROGRAMS: These are the same:

1. Challenge of the Yukon: Demerest family; Big Strike mine; Inheritance. As far as I know this is the only 30-minute program around. There are a few 15-minute programs from an LP.
2. Jack Benny: 3/16/47; New Quartette; B Crosby, A Russell, D Haymes; Academy Awards
3. Jack Benny: 4/4/48; R Coleman's oscar lost; Ink Spots
4. Inner Sanctum: Professor's Elixir #4; Perpetual Youth; Fountain of Youth; R Widmark (Hermit's Cave has a program called Professor's Elixir and it is different.)

Let me know of duplications you have made because of title problems.

PERIODICALS: Winter issue of Radio Dial arrived. Excellent reading as usual. Feb. issue of Stay Tuned came (1250 La Baron Circle, Webster, NY 14580). This new monthly newsletter is put out by Bob Joseph and John Monroe with help from their wives. Their last issue was about 20 pages.

QUIZ: There has been literally no response to the last 2 quizzes because of hardness or lack of interest. I am going to discontinue them. If you still want them send in answers to Jan and Feb quiz. I send a reel of programs to the winner of each quiz. Previous winners have been Ernie Hack, Bruce Ruggles, and David Swift.

USED TAPES: Some traders send used tapes. Please use new tapes unless an agreement has been reached with the person you are trading with. Almost all traders use polyester-based tapes. Over 90% of the tapes that I have received are Concert or Shamrock.

TH

Type



✓ DAK TAPE: I received a contribution from Drew Alan Kaplan, President of DAK Enterprises. Among other things they ... recondition Scotch and Ampex tape and sell it at very low prices. I have found this tape to be very satisfactory. I understand others of you are starting to use it. Let me know how you feel about it. (Dak Enterprises, Box 69920, West Hollywood, Cal 90069).

RELISTINGS: I have relisted my Jack Benny programs. I also have special lists of my Amas programs as well as many of the programs I dubbed directly from disc. Also relisted are my Escape and Inner Sanctum. I would like to find people with more of certain programs than I have. My trading has slowed to a crawl because there are only certain programs I am looking for. Programs that I am interested in with the number of them that I have follow:

- |   |                           |
|---|---------------------------|
| ARCH OBOLER (not Devil and Mr. O)-13        |                           |
| BANDS: (different band leaders)-98          |                           |
| BLONDIE-6                                   | HERMITS CAVE:-9           |
| COLUMBIA PRESENTS CORWIN-3                  | INNER SANCTUM-27          |
| CBS RADIO WORKSHOP-18                       | JACK BENNY-94             |
| DENNIS DAY-5                                | JUDY CANOVA-3             |
| ESCAPE-47                                   | LIGHTS OUT (original)-2   |
| EXPLORING TOMORROW (complete only)-3        | LETS PRETEND (complete)-7 |
| GUNSMOKE-76                                 | MYSTERIOUS TRAVELER-24    |
| 2000 PLUS-7                                 | MR. KEEN-3                |
| WHATEVER BECAME OF (radio personalities)-44 | SUSPENSE-308              |

SUSPENSE: Copies of over 200 programs with correct dates are still available; MORE INFO: Like Man Somebody Dig Me; L Day; 8/9/59: Loves Lovely Counterfeit; also 1/17/48: Lodger; also 2/14/48: Woman in Red; 4/6/44; Flood on Goodwins; 7/14/57: Red Cloud Mesa; 8/2/59: House by the River; 2/28/48: Headshrinker; 8/23/59

✓ HERE AND THERE: New Friends: Larry Kiner, 7554 132nd Ave NE, Kirkland, Wash 98033. Larry has been collecting for about 3 years and has over 8000 programs....Bob Joseph mentioned to Mel Shlank of a Canadian collector with between 12,000 and 15,000 programs. I'll pass on his name when I get it....Cecil West, Box 10787, Orlando Fla, 32810. ...Tom Alexander, 1870 NW 42 Terrace, Ft. Lauderdale, Fla 33313. Tom is very interested in trading. Tom has a good listing of about 300 programs....Bill Natowich, 145 Burton Rd, Beacon Falls, Conn 06403. Bill is a new Connecticut collector who is just starting....Lyn Taylor, 425 S. Hastings Ave, Fullerton, Cal 92633. Lyn is Dean of Instruction at a community college in Cal. The history department is planning a project that would concentrate efforts on old time radio personalities, the technical crew, and the sponsors. Lyn is very interested in interviews of old timers telling about the early days of radio. ) Trad

Old Friends: Got a phone call from Raleigh Barker from Kansas (having a WATTA line really helps). Raleigh just purchased an Aiwa (Japanese) tape recorder. It is very compact, 2-track, and sells for under \$100. He uses it in the car....Ed Carceran's radio programs on WTIC are going very well. For those who haven't heard, each month Ed and Dick Bertel interview a different radio personality (50-60 min). Last month he interviewed Goodman Ace and in Feb. they interviewed Rosa Rio, radio organist. I have all of the interviews on tape. Don Koehnemann gets them almost as fast as I do....Don Brush is doing an in-depth study of The Aldrich Family. He has talked to Ezra Stone and will be talking to Jackie Kelk shortly. Don would appreciate any detailed information about the program and personalities. (D B, 19 Greenhouse Blvd, West Hartford, Conn 06110....Roy Bright puts together radio programs

recad



for a local radio station, WIVC-FM in Peoria, Ill. They checked with their lawyers and were told that as long as the station uses a good variety of shows there would be no legal problems....Joe Hehn has put together one of the best looking catalogs around. It is extremely detailed and very well printed(J H, 422 N 9th St, Allentown, Penn 18102. ...Eric Klarer, the very successful 8th-grade entrepreneur, is now putting out a quarterly entitled "Reminiscing Time." It will deal with the golden days of radio, the golden age of motion pictures, and the swing era-its music, big bands, etc. Also featured will be comic books, radio premiums, and the great movie palaces. It will have something for everybody. Subscription will be \$5.00 a year for 4 issues, each not less than 15 pages. Will tell you more about when I receive my first copy....Chris Lembesis Jr. will soon be doing an in-depth interview of Jack Benny....Fred McFadden has, I believe, the largest collection of material related to Judy Garland. In any case he has a huge amount of radio material with Judy and is always looking for more (F M, RD4, Westernville Rd, Rome, NY 13440....Jack Miller is still going strong with his R3VP radio program. Another one is coming up in late March....Join Nostalgia Book Club, 525 Main St, New Rochelle, N<sup>y</sup> 10801....Bruce Ruggles (and I) would like to see all collectors be very careful about listing dates. If you know the day of the program check the date with a perpetual calendar (available in the World Almanac). It's discouraging to receive a show that signs off "see you next Wednesday" only to find it listed as a Sunday program. If you know what day certain programs were on (many changed as they went along) please let me know. To give you an idea how the days change, here is Suspense:  
6/17/42-9/30/42 (Wed); 10/27/42-8/10/43 (Tues); 8/21/43-11/23/43 (various days); 12/2/43-11/?/47 (Thurs); 11/28/47-12/26/47 (Fri); Early 1948 saw hour programs on Sat; Unsure until 8/4/49-11/16/50 (Thurs); Unsure until 8/27/51-5/24/54 (Mon); sometime after that on Tues until late 1956 or early 1957; 1957-9/30/62 (Sun)....Chris Lembesis is looking for the sources of all radio programs in circulation now. If you dubbed your programs from discs or know who started some programs going around would you let him know? Chris is especially looking for the source of all Jack Benny programs (C L, 6108 East Monlaco, Long Beach, Cal 90808....David Swift just bought 10 new 1800-foot Concert, which were all short. I'm beginning to hear complaints about Concert, especially 1800. How do you find it? Dave recently got a letter from Joseph Curtin (Mr. and Mrs. North) who enjoyed some memories Dave gave him. Alice Frost was his favorite leading lady.(D S, 38 Dartmouth St, Halifax, Mass 02338)....Apologies to Mel Shlank. He is the source of Broadcasting magazine which I BORROW....Miller Hahn has had no trouble with PVC tape but then Miller cleans his heads after every tape runthrough He reminds all of you to consistently clean your heads (tape, that is). ...Stuart Weiss is interested in Lone Ranger, Shadow, Cisco Kid, Mos and Andy, Challenge of the Yukon, Abbott and Costello Jack Benny, Gun-smoke (S W, 430 Ocean Pkwy, Brooklyn, NY 11218

Pat

Long

heads

JACK BENNY: There was a nice write-up about Jack in the National Enquirer (3/7/71). HIGHLIGHTS: Has raised almost \$5 million in charity concerts. Most of the money has been used to assist symphony orchestras. His first concert was in Carnegie Hall in 1956. Since 1958 his concerts have been raising money for orchestras. Love in Bloom was used once on a radio program in the 30's. Later, needing a song in a hurry they again played Love in Bloom. It cropped up hear and there and gradually people associated him with the song. Jack never really liked the song but eventually he was stuck with it as his theme. Jack was 77 on Feb. 14th. He is still extremely active, never looking at the past but at the future. His advice for young entertainers: "Work hard, be lucky - and save your money."



The following will, hopefully, be a monthly feature of tidbits contributed by Carl Erickson.

AIRCHECKS  
by Carl T. Erickson

----In many catalogs of collectors the first broadcast by the Mercury Theater is frequently listed as "Dracula." In fact their opening program was presented on Monday, July 11, 1936 with the dramatization of "Treasure Island." There is an excellent story of Orson Welles in The New Yorker, Feb. 20 and 27, 1971.

----During the week of March 6, 1938, almost 35% of available air time was sponsored. During that period 52% of the programs offered were musicals--shows, records, or songs. News broadcasts made up 8.5% of the broadcasts and drama and variety programs filled 18% of the time.

----After its debut in 1936 the show, Gangbusters, had made an impressive notch in the annals of crime fighting within 2 years. The regular announcement and description of wanted criminals following the show had resulted in the apprehension of over 100 miscreants. Foster May of WOW in Omaha trapped one of these fugitives himself, but before turning him over to the law, he returned to the station, gathered up the shortwave equipment and interviewed his prisoner. The use of short-wave transmission for interviews, remote locations broadcasts, sports events, was quite common at that time.

----In March of 1935, James Arthur Miller, a radio engineer, developed a method of recording sound on a film tape. The method had been by the non-commercial BBC from 1935 to 1939, and by an advertising agency in London for broadcasting shows over Radio Luxembourg and Radio Normandie--two commercial outlets on the continent, with English programs beamed toward the British Isles. The first show broadcast on this tape in the U.S. was the GOOD WILL HOUR, sponsored by Ironized Yeast. The 1/2 hour program was recorded on 2000 feet of film tape. Eventually in 1939 it was hoped that the system using a ray of light would be available to the domestic market at a 1939 cost of \$2.00 per tape and from \$150 to \$3000 for a player.

QUIZ: Just received 6 correct answers for Feb. quiz. Because of this I am continuing the quiz. Answers to Jan. quiz. follow. Then follows this month's quiz. Each quiz lasts for 2 months so keep sending answers in to Feb quiz. Winner gets a reel of programs. From now on at least half of the answers can be found in Radio's Golden Age.

ANSWERS JAN QUIZ: 1. "Yours is my Heart Alone; Willoughby's Store in Weaverville; Mildred: 2. Wing to Wing. 3. Orchids to You. 4. Judy Canova: 5. Amanda of Honeymoon Hill: 6. Chaplain Jim: 7. Centerville; W: 8. Escape: 9. Here's Babe Ruth: 10. 46 River Rd, Spring City.

MARCH QUIZ

1. What was the name of Mr. Aldrich's secretary; What was Sam Aldrich's job; What was the name of the Aldrich's dog?
2. What is the name of the hotel in Cunasoke?
3. How old is Rollo on DADDY AND ROLLO?
4. What is the name of the dog in the Ozzie Nelson program?
5. What cigarette did you smoke "for a treat instead of a treatment?"
6. Scheherazade was the theme of what program?
7. What soap opera took place in the town of Three Rivers?
8. What serial drama had for its star Richard Widmark, Carleton Young, and Staats Cotsworth at different times?
9. The nickname of what program was Elsie Beebe?
10. What 2 themes were associated with MY FRIEND IRMA?



## AN APPEAL TO ALL RADIO COLLECTORS

LOST AND FOUND ---Found. A lady in Chicago who, with her father, performed on many radio programs in the '30's and '40's. They used to have some recordings of their radio appearances tucked away in the basement, but---LOST. Another opportunity to listen to the Golden Days of Radio, to add to the lists of recordings to be shared.

Fellow Collectors: How can you and I best locate the people who have personal recordings still in those basements, or attics, or garages? How can you and I get these recordings before the Land Fill does?

First, can we brainstorm it? What are your ideas for getting the message out to the public that we are interested in preserving radio material? Letters, phone calls, ads, publicity? To whom, where, how?

Second, are you willing, ready, and able to do something to aid in the search for such recordings? I believe that many recordings exist; that they exist in places other than just in the big cities; that they exist where old radio personalities or their families live.

Further, I believe that most people who have personal copies of recordings would be flattered and pleased with the knowledge that we care about preserving and proliferating these recordings, and that these people would be happy and willing to share them with us.

I have several "pet wants" and I am trying to dig them up. I think a concerted effort on the part of many collectors will bear fruit.

If you are interested in joining in the search, share your ideas with all of us. If you send me your ideas, I will collate them and send you a copy of ideas received. Just send a self-addressed stamped envelope with your idea. If someone else has facilities or time to carry through on this more easily, faster, or better than I, I will happily aid him in this task.

Don Koehnemann  
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LAST MINUTE MAIL AND TIDBITS: Larry Kiner has written some very nice music. I played 6 of the numbers on the piano and sent him the tape. If anyone wants the recording send a very small reel of tape and I will dub it for you....Carroll Weiss, 122 East 76th St, New York, NY 10021. Carroll is just starting to trade and is very interested in THE BIG SHOW. He also has a lot of experience with tape-slide synchronization for semi-automated slide projector shows....Harry Sova completed his first class teaching radio production and turned out 41 students interested in the medium of radio. His 120-page project on 1927 radio and television will be mimeographed shortly. He and another radio-television instructor have just begun the operational phase of a computerized broadcasting bibliography. They hope to have some 12,000 articles by December. The system is designed to hold 1,000,000 articles, all cross-referenced and printed out by author, title, date, etc....Don Pellow has reactivated his NO STATIC-PLEASE under the title ECHOES OF THE PAST. Just received the first issue and it is excellently put together. This first issue is short but contains some nice illustrations and a good article by Bill Hennessey on TARZEN (D P, 705 East Chandler St, Evansville, Ind. 47713)....CONFUSION: Date of BIG SHOW often listed as 11/25/50 should be 11/26/50. THE BIG SHOW was on Sunday....After running off my stencils although there are no ink spots I can't seem to avoid fades in places. Please bear with me....The NBC chimes end on the note C. This is a good way to tell whether a program is too fast or slow. Buy a C tuning fork. This is handy if you aren't near a piano or don't have perfect pitch.... Please write to Don Koehnemann if you know anyone in the Orlando, Florida area who can tape 16" transcription discs....



Radio programs for children began and developed in a haphazard fashion. Many of the youngsters' programs in the early days were of the sustaining variety; that is, without commercial sponsorship. One of the first programs for the very young in our country was "Uncle Don". Other countries followed suit with their Uncle and Aunt programs. As this was an untried area, there was no set pattern for networks to follow. There were complaints against the Uncle programs, as well as compliments. The complaints came mainly from parents whose children did not have their names announced over the air. The compliments came from the other corner of the ring.

During the time of the Uncle programs, the networks tried to encourage the growth of more programs. This effort was carried on through the collaboration of school teachers, parents and those in the radio field. The CBS network agreed to turn its facilities over to the parents and teachers to do one program. This program proved to be a drastic mistake, resulting in total failure.

As children's programs were for the most part of a sustaining variety, they did not increase in number rapidly. The outstanding reason for this being that they were scheduled at irregular hours, and many stations were primarily interested in making an income. Therefore they would choose a commercial program over a sustaining one. In the beginning, programs were short, few lasting over thirty minutes. The majority of these programs were heard on weekday afternoons.

Child Study magazine in April of 1933 was the first publication to conduct a study of children's listening habits. The pole was small, with 286 children. It should be pointed out at the beginning that children's programs were new, and few programs were primarily directed towards them. The majority were adult programs. The results of this study showed that musical variety programs were extremely popular. The average listening time per week, per student was eleven and a half hours, with the strongest concentration between 5:15 and 8:15. Children, even at this time, were primarily interested in the production standards. The better the production, the higher the rating.

Parental influence was great one reason being that many families only had one radio. Parents in general were concerned about how many hours their children should be allowed to listen to the radio. They were also concerned over serial programming. They disapproved strongly of terror programs that ended abruptly on a climactic note. Some children actually awoke at night screaming.

As a direct result of this, children stayed away from this type of program and forced the writers to change their style. Jack Armstrong, Superman, the Green Hornet became popular and they were sponsored programs. By this time, the sponsors realized that there was definitely a market for their products through children. This shift caused an upsurge of talent programs designed for youngsters with young amateurs showing their ability. This was poor entertainment, with parents forcing children to perform, and producing social conflicts.



## GOLDEN RADIO CONVENTION

I should like to propose an idea that I have been toying with for several years now and believe that this is the time and the year for it. In order for the success of this project, it would have to be a joint venture with all interested persons throughout the U.S. and Canada. As a cartoonist I have been attending the comic book conventions in New York City since 1965 and it was then that I reasoned, why not a convention for golden radio buffs? I propose "The First Annual Eastern Convention of Golden Radio Buffs" to be held in New Haven, Conn. sometime during the month of July, consisting of a Friday-Sunday weekend and held at one of the hotels or motor inns in the area. Rooms could be set up with antique radios for exhibition purposes, or for sale, depending on the owner. Collectors may bring recorders with them for copying. Also blank tape would be on sale on the premises. The general public would also be invited, as well as press and TV coverage. If we begin now, we will arrange for golden radio personalities to be on hand as guests and to later address us with some interesting talk on the good old days of radio. The first night would also be ideal for a cocktail hour where we may all meet and get acquainted with one another. The hotel would also be ideal for out-of-towners. Let me know what you think of my brain-child and if it deserves a good healthy effort. Remember, only you can make it a success.

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## SOUNDS WHAT SOUNDS.

Picture a man, in your mind's eye, on the 23rd story of a New York City building. He is barricaded in a room and voices are pleading with him to come out. He does not speak <sup>and</sup> that was the horror of it. The best horror is never stated. Like humor, the moment you inform people you are about to tell a joke, it is no longer funny. Anyway, here is the story:

You hear a person that sounds like a man of the cloth, trying to convince him to come out, and whoever was in the room was desperate. You hear a man you assume to be a police sergeant ordering, "Bring his wife in." You hear her come in and she begins to plead with him to come out. You can feel the hysteria growing. All of a sudden you are mysteriously transported and you are inside the room with the man. This is one of the wonderful things that can be accomplished with sound effects. You hear the window going up and very faintly in the distance you hear what sounds like street traffic noises and it stays there for a second or so. You hear the wind blowing from 23 stories up. Suddenly you hear something that sounds like a scrape on the window sill. A few faint cries are heard way down on the ground and then a whooshing, whistling sound, like wind, and the microphone following him all the way down. Then the sound of voooommp. Something has hit the pavement with a god-awful sound. What a sound it made. That was the end of the show. People all over the country were flipping because it was so unbelievably realistic.

It was never stated what he did. The man's voice was never heard but you knew it was a man and you didn't know why he did it. This was a show for one of the early LIGHTS OUT series.

Do you know how the sounds were created? On cue, for the street traffic, a microphone was hung out the window in Rockefeller Center on the 83rd story. This was what made it so frightening, because it



all sounded so real. At the moment this was to happen (and the timing had to be perfect) at the studio, they had a high ladder that went the entire height of the ceiling of about 25 or 30 feet. At the base of the ladder was placed two blocks of concrete pavement. Next to the pavement was placed a microphone aimed at the point where the body was supposed to fall. On cue, at the top of the ladder, a 28-pound water-melon was dropped. It was a sound. You could just hear this thing split open. Somehow it just went balooompp-not just bump or thud. It split. It was fantastic; it was terrifying. It was like standing at ground level 6 feet away when this guy lands next to you. This was a classic.

Then there was another one about a guy planning a surprise party for his wife...but I'd better tell that one next month

Your friendly storyteller  
Sal Trapani

MORE LATE TIDBITS: Hope you appreciated the material by Sal Trapani, Evan MacBride, Don Koehnemann, and Carl Erickson. The bulk of this month's Hello Again will be a very detailed article about tape written by Polly and Esther (oh boy) otherwise known as Mel Shlank....Just received the first issue of Eric Alarar's newsletter; a very good job, especially since he is 13. He appears to be a one-man (boy) operation... Fred Province was awarded a Silver Beaver, the highest honor in scouting. Fred, besides having a large collection of radio programs, is one of our more versatile members, being active in many fields, especially scouting....Date of JOAN DAVIS TIME with B Thomas is not 12/20/44. Correct date should be a Saturday. Who knows what it is?....SAME PROGRAM: LASSIE: 1/18/48; One-eyed cat; also Jumpy saves baby's life....When you are dubbing a 30-min program from two 15-min discs, PLEASE DON'T LEAVE EMPTY SPACES: Usually the program breaks during an applause. In any case don't start the tape recorder BEFORE the turntable. You will just be dubbing silence....Evan MacBride has just written an extensive catalog of his collection of 78's. It is in alphabetical order by performer. (E M, 3521 Arden Creek Rd, Sacramento, Cal 95825....If anyone wants Carlton E Morse's phone number (he likes to receive calls from people interested in his programs) write Roy Bright, 2929 St. Philomena Ct, Peoria, Ill 61604....Bill Hennessey is interested in One Mans's Family- any books prior to Book 77 or following Book 80 (B H, 406 Rollingwood Lane, St Louis, Mo 63122)....Ray Oden, 222 Winchester St, Brookline, Mass 02146. Ray is particularly interested in Suspense....Bill Duck, 13 Plymouth Rd, Cherry Hill, NJ 08034. Bill is especially interested in Fred Allen. He also collects books about radio, magazines, pictures of radio stars. Bill is 34 and is a computer programmer for RCA. His list of over 1000 programs is the first I've seen done by a computer.... NEW PROGRAMS: Recent additions to the trading circuit: 1943 Jack Bennys sponsored by Grape Nuts; a 1934 Kraft Music Hall with Paul Whiteman.... MORE SUSPENSE: Passage to Benaris; also 10/23/46; Till Death do us Part; also 11/5/61; Life and Death of Joaquin Maurietta; 2/16/53....Next month will be the beginning of an article about hints to traders by Bruce Rugles....Got a call from Dave Riseman, Box 198, Randolph, Mass 02358. Dave recently started collecting and is interested in programs, premiums, comics....So--let me know what you want, new programs and information of interest, new Suspense dates, new supplements, etc. etc. Until next time....

Write if you get work  
Hang by your thumbs

Jay H. Hickerson

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Tape, tape, tape. Why does one brand sell for \$ 1.59 for an 1800 foot reel (SHAMROCK) and yet another brand cost as much as \$ 7.40 for an 1800 foot reel (SCOTCH 290) ? What does PVC mean ? What is acetate ? What is mylar ? What is polyester ? What does tensilized mean ? Why are some tapes tensilized and some tapes not ? What does oxide coating mean ?

As a person new to trading old radio programs on tape, those were just some of the questions that entered my mind as I started to buy tape to do my dubbing. Just what is this thing called tape I wondered.

So many different terms. Low print; low noise-wide dynamic range; all purpose; long play; double length; triple length and more. What brand and what kind of tape should I use ?

As a person with a slight background in chemistry and a fair knowledge of electronics, I decided to learn as much as I could about recording tape, how it works, what the different terms mean and why the cost varies so much.

This was about a year and a half ago. Since that time I have constantly been trying to obtain the answers to the above questions and more. I finally have arrived at the point where I believe that I know the answers to just about all of these questions and knowing that many other traders have similar questions, I thought that I would write this article and share my wordly knowledge (???) with others.

Let's begin with the terms acetate, PVC, polyester and mylar. These are the terms that are given to the "backing" of the tape. Now naturally you want to know what does he mean by the "backing" ? The backing is the back side of the tape that is the "carrier" for the oxide coating that the electronic information is magnetically recorded onto. This oxide is actually metallic in nature and therefore as it passes through the magnetic field that is set up by the heads of the tape recorder, the iron partickes align themselves in such a manner as to be able to reproduce sounds that have been fed into the machine.

I suppose that at this point I could go into more detail as to what oxide is but I shall pass as it gets rather technical in the chemistry, and I doubt if you really care anyway.

And now back to the term "backing" (or "base" as it is sometimes called). This backing is actually a chemical compound that is made up especially for the purpose mentioned above. The two cheaper "backings" are acetate and PVC. Polyester (mylar) costs a little more to manufacture. Acetate is the most brittle and therefore breaks the easiest. It does have the one big advantage that when it has too much stress placed upon it, it will break quite clean. It does not stretch out like polyester (mylar). This means that one can splice it real "tight" and lose virtually no program material. Also, the program material immediately around the break is not distorted as the tape has not stretched like it would if it were polyester (mylar).

The term "tensilized" means that the tape has been pre-stretched to eliminate the problem of the tape stretching (or weakening) on fast starts and/or stops. This is especially important with some of todays decks that are capable of building up such speed that they can rewind a 1200 foot reel of tape in less than one minute. Can you imagine what







kind of stress is built up on the tape if you try and stop it 3/4 of the way through the reel ? Unless your machines brakes are adjusted absolutely perfectly, under the conditions just described, a reel of acetate tape is certain to break. The other types will not if they have been tensilized.

Most tapes are not tensilized in the 1200 foot length as this normally means that they are wound on a 7 inch reel and therefore the thickness of them is 1.5 mils which is the thickest that audio tape comes in. In order to obtain longer lengths in tape that can be wound on a 7 inch reel, the tape has to be thinner to fit. 1 mil for the 1800 foot length and 0.5 mils for the longer 2400 and 3600 foot lengths.

These later two lengths must be tensilized or you are going to have much trouble with the tape as the thinner that it is, the easier it will stretch even on the machines that have a "slow" fast forward and reverse.

PVC which is actually the abbreviation for polyvinyl chloride, is about the same cost as acetate but has the important advantage that it can be tensilized. As I understand it, all PVC tape is tensilized irregardless to its length. As an interesting sidelight I must mention that polyester (and mylar) tapes are not tensilized for the 1.5 mil thickness, only for the 1.0 and 0.5 thicknesses. I am not certain as to the reason behind this, but I suspect that it is because the PVC is actually a little weaker than the acetate.

Polyester is the most expensive of all recording tape bases. It is the toughest of all bases and is the favorite of most people. Mylar is essentially the same composition but it is the registered trade-name of the Dupont Corporation. I think that one need not worry as to whether a tape is polyester or mylar. They are so similar that one can consider them in fact to be the same.

The terms long play, double and triple length simply refer to the length of the tape as the name implies and nothing more. The standard length is 1200 feet and double length is twice that or 2400 feet and triple length is triple that or 3600 feet. Long play tape is 1800 feet long. For many years the longest tape was 1200 feet, when the 1800 foot length came out, it was called "long play" because it was longer than the regular length. Then came the thinner 0.5 thickness and with it the 2400 foot length and finally the 3600 foot length. In fact at least one company is now making tape in the 4800 foot length by having it be 0.25 mil in thickness. I have not handled any of this tape but I suspect that it would be somewhat difficult to handle knowing the difference between the 1.5 mil and 0.5 mil thickness insofar as handling is concerned.

The term "low print" means that the tape has been manufactured in such a manner that the sound on one layer of tape will not transfer to the next layer (somewhat lower in volume of course) when the tape is left untouched over many years. Many large users of tape make it a practice to run each reel of tape through from one end to the other at least once a year in order to prevent this from happening. What actually happens is that the magnetic field on one layer of the tape partially transfers itself to the next layer of the tape when it is







left untouched over a long period of time. This problem is more prevalent on the longer lengths of tape than on the shorter as they are thinner, this of course means that each layer is a little closer to the next. Therefore the chance of transfer is greater. Low print tape has been designed to prevent this from happening. The cost of it is only a little more than regular tape although not all companies make it. On leaving this subject I would just like to add the point that those people who often have a tendency to "over-record" or record at too high a level run the risk of this happening far more often than if they record at a normal level. This is of course in addition to the problem of distortion that over-recording usually brings. This transfer of sound from one layer to the next is called "print-through".

For years classical music lovers (among others) complained that there was too much noise inherent in the tape to suit them. They wanted a tape that was quieter so that when listening to a soft piece of music they would not hear the tape hiss as this noise is called. Low noise tape was then developed to satisfy these people. It is made a little differently (the chemistry of which I shall not go into) and the cost is about 20 to 25% higher but well worth the difference to those that are concerned with this problem. It is usually called low noise-wide dynamic range due to the fact that you can listen to music (and enjoy it more) that goes from one extreme to the other in-so-far as its sound level is concerned. Those of you that are familiar with either Beethoven's symphony # 5 or # 9 know how much and how fast this tremendous change in sound level can take place.

Tape that is called all purpose is just that. It is made for "average" use, whatever that means. Seriously though, all purpose tape is by far the most widely sold tape and is the best tape for most uses, or so the companies say.

When a novice starts to buy tape he is as much confused by the range of price as he is by the different types of tape, especially as the price changes from company to company even for identical types of tape. As I said ~~xxxxxx~~ at the start of this article, the cost of an 1800 foot reel can vary from about \$ 1.59 to \$ 7.40 unless one can obtain a discount which is rare with tape. As many of you no doubt already know, even the exact same "type" of tape can vary by as much as a dollar from (name brand) company to (name brand) company.

There are many different stories floating around as to what different tapes are. I have done a considerable amount of research on this subject and shall try to clarify this subject as much as I can.

First let me say that one should not avoid PVC tape completely because one has had a bad experience with it once or twice. This should actually go for any type of tape but I single out PVC because I have just heard of a trader that will not accept PVC tape because he had a bad experience with it. Just the other day I borrowed three reels of tape to dub and noted that they were all PVC. I found all three of these reels to be the dirtiest tape that I have ever handled. After using each reel I had to use almost 20 Q tips to clean off my heads, guides, etc., etc.



I do not blame PVC for this, it is the fault of the manufacturer. The tape that this other person had used was of a different brand than the tape that I had used, yet we had the same trouble. This sounds pretty incriminating against PVC doesn't it ? Let me ask this though, did you know that one of the largest and I might add best tape manufacturers in the world makes very little other than PVC tape ? I am referring to a German manufacturer by the name of BASF. I just recently used several reels of their tape and had absolutely no trouble what-so-ever. In fact, at about the same time I used half a dozen reels of DALTRONIX PVC tape and also had no trouble. What I am trying to bring out is this : do not jump to conclusions too fast !

A term that has many people confused is lubricated tape. All recording tape is lubricated to some extent as far as I know. When tape people refer to lubricated tape, they are usually referring to tape that has been lubricated in a special way so that it can be used for tape cartridges. There are three types of cartridges, one type that radio stations use to play their commercials and public service announcements. The second type is the familiar 8 track cartridge. There is also the older 4 track cartridge that was popular for a while for use in cars. This has been replaced in popularity by the 8 track cartridge. I do not want to go into depth concerning the construction of cartridges here, but just let me say that the tape that is used in these cartridges has to be lubricated properly if one is to get much use out of them.

It is for these cartridges that the specially lubricated tape as it is called is made. This special lubrication means that in addition to the oxide side of the tape having a very slight amount of (dry) lubricant, the backing (or base) must also be lubricated. In fact, this layer of lubrication must be a far superior grade of lubricant due to the nature of the way that cartridges work.

Most of you have probably never seen the inside of a cartridge. There is only one "spool" or hub inside of the case. The tape is in one continuous piece and is always in motion (when the tape is being used). It starts at the center of the hub and continually winds around in a circular fashion until it finally reaches the outside where it passes the heads of the machine. It then goes directly back to the inside where it once again starts its travel towards the outside,

As you can probably imagine from the above brief description, there is always a great amount of friction present. It is for this reason that the back side of the tape must be lubricated.

An "ordinary" tape lubricant is put on the oxide side of virtually all tape made for audio use. This lubrication is there to minimize tape head wear. One must remember that the tape heads are the ears and tongues of your tape unit. As the tape passes these heads there is some friction set up, it is for this reason that tapes made today contain lubricants as these lubricants help to reduce head wear. The lubricant of cheaper tapes will rub off after a few passes across the heads and there-after will subject the heads to a lot more wear. When the lubricant is gone the tape becomes abrasive and starts to wear pits into the heads. These pits tend to trap the shedding oxide and form a gummy surface. A dead callous is then built up between the



the heads and the passing tape. This shuts out all high frequency sounds after a while. In time the sound becomes muffled and eventually the sound virtually disappears.

High quality tape has a more expensive lubricant and will remain on the tape for its entire life (or so the manufacturers say). Needless to say, the use of high quality tape will prolong the life of the tape heads. Not only that, but high quality tape has a more uniform frequency response and most sounds will actually sound better on high quality tape, especially music.

I have found it somewhat amazing at how few people that deal with tape really know much about it, especially tape salesmen. At this point, before I go any further, let me say that I do not consider myself an expert on this subject, there is plenty that I do not know about tape. In fact I have never seen tape being manufactured, something which I hope to rectify in the not too distant future. I have read up on tape, talked to many people that are in the tape business and have looked at some pictures which show some of the many steps that are taken in the manufacture of tape, I do not however consider myself an expert.

It is amazing at how many ridiculous things salesmen in some stores will tell you about tape. I have had men in Radio Shack stores tell me that their CONCERT brand of tape is the regular first line tape of the AUDIO-TAPE Company. I can tell you for a definite fact that it is not ! I have also been told by people that claimed to know, that SHAMROCK tape is regular first line AMPEX tape that has been put in a cheaper package and designed to attract the "low-price" market, this also is not true.

As I said a little earlier in this article, I have spoken to many people in the tape business, including people in the IRISH division of AMPEX. This fact in itself may surprise many people. AMPEX and IRISH tapes are made by the same parent company and are of equal quality. The only difference that I can find is that the IRISH tape that comes on 3,5 and 7 inch reels comes with color coded 30 inch leaders and trailers along with metallic reversing strips for the benefit of those tape deck users who have units that reverse automatically by the use of metallic strips. Also every 3,5 and 7 inch box of IRISH tape comes through with a signature binder and piece of gold foil. These items are used both to strengthen the end of the box and also to personalize the box yourself. The quality of the tape itself is excellent, the same as AMPEX tape is. IRISH is not the cheap cousin to AMPEX the way that some people say.

SHAMROCK is another story, in fact so is EMERALD. Both of these brands are identical and are the reject tape from AMPEX/IRISH. Some of this tape is audio reject but some is also computer and/or video tape that did not come up to spec for its originally intended use. When this happens, it is cut to the  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch width that audio tape comes in and is sold as SHAMROCK or EMERALD.

The reason that I say that it is cut to the  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch width is that computer tape is normally  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch or wider, depending on the type of machine that it was intended for. Video tape is normally one inch or



greater in width. The quality insofar as its use for audio is ~~xxxx~~ concerned of the SHAMROCK and EMERALD tapes ranges from one extreme to the other and no claims are made by the company itself insofar as performance is concerned. You "pays your money and you takes your chances" is really what they~~xx~~ say. Some of these reels are every bit as good as the very highest quality audio tape and some are pretty bad. Most are somewhere inbetween. Many times audio tape is rejected for what you or I might consider to be a very minor thing such as a reel being ~~xxx~~ 2 or 3 % short (actually a run of reels). When this happens you get perfectly good tape and only suffer the penalty that the reel may be a minute or two short. With good tape this is perfectly all right anyway as all name brand companies make their reels a little longer than the printed figures. If you have ever timed a reel of name brand 1200 foot~~xx~~ tape you have no doubt found out that it runs for 62 or 63 minutes, not 60 as you would expect. Therefore as you can see, there is a little tolerance and it is always on the plus side when one deals with a good brand of tape.

Getting back to the SHAMROCK/EMERALD variety of tapes, about the biggest trouble with these tapes is that they are over-oxidized and there is a tremendous amount of oxide shedding. As I understand it, sometimes the only reason for some of this tape being considered "reject tape" is that it is either the beginning of the run or the end of the run and the oxide is a little too heavy. After it has been used a few times and the excess oxide has rubbed off, it is sometimes as good as \$ 7.40 a reel tape as stated above.

The person that I talked to in the AMPEX/IRISH organization said that ~~tape~~ that will be harmful to tape heads is not packaged under the SHAMROCK or EMERALD name but is sold to other companies whose specifications and/or tolerances are not as exacting.

From what I have been able to gather almost any tape that is close to  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch in width and somewhere near 1200, 1800, 2400 or 3600 feet in length is packaged under the CONCERT name for the RADIO SHACK chain. If anyone from the RADIO SHACK organization reads this article and does not like this last statement, let me say that I know a number of tape users that have complained of CONCERT tape being as much as four and five minutes short of its claimed length. I had one reel that was seven minutes short of its claimed time (length). I also can produce tape users who have received CONCERT tape which had one or more splices despite RADIO SHACKS' claim that it is "splice free". Other problems with CONCERT tape have been oxide that shed so badly that it (the oxide) could be scrapped off of the heads with a knife it was so thick, also tape that was jagged on one edge and even tape that did not contain oxide on the full width of the tape. Also tape that was too wide and would not pass through machines made to exacting standards such as the SONY TC-666D deck (which I have one of).

In addition to these problems I have had reels of CONCERT tape that had noise and static on the tape that could not be erased either by erase heads on a tape machine or by a bulk eraser. This noise and static then appeared on the tape along with the new material that was being dubbed. My good friend Jay Hickerson tells me that he also has had reels that have been like those I just described. Jay and I have also had at least one reel each of CONCERT tape that had a very loud whistle on it that also could not be erased by any method. I have also



heard of many other traders who have experienced one or more of these problems with CONCERT tape and I suspect that this is the reason why many of them will no longer use or accept from others this brand of tape despite its cheap price.

It is not my intention to try and analyze every brand of tape in this article or even to analyze many of them. I devoted a great deal of time to both ~~ax~~ SHAMROCK and CONCERT because they are the two most commonly used tape among traders and they also have the most amount of "mystique" about them. With respect to CONCERT tape, I have no axe to grind with the RADIO SHACK organization but due to the dozens of complaints that I have heard from other tape users and from information that was given to me by knowledgable people in the tape business it is obvious that when one buys CONCERT tape he is really taking a chance. As I indicated previously, I myself have had many of these problems and when I went to return the defective reels for new ones I have always been given a hard time and been told that "no-one else ever ~~x~~ brings back CONCERT tape--why do I ?"

Up until this point I have spoken mainly about reel to reel tape, just touching upon cartridge tape for a brief moment. As you no doubt realize, reel to reel tape can be and is played at any number of different speeds. The most common speeds used at radio stations are 30 and 15 inches per second (ips). Most home users play their tapes at  $7\frac{1}{2}$  or  $3\text{-}3\frac{1}{4}$  ips. Unfortunately more and more tape users are turning to the slower  $1\text{-}7\frac{7}{8}$  ips speed.

The reason that I used the term unfortunately with respect to the  $1\text{-}7\frac{7}{8}$  ips speed is that at that slow speed the frequency response is considerably worse than at the higher speeds. Many of you have no doubt been told that it is perfectly ok to use this slower speed for all uses. This fairly common notion is a false one. Unless one has a TANDBERG tape deck or has a DOLBY NOISE REDUCTION unit he should not use the  $1\text{-}7\frac{7}{8}$  ips speed for anything except speech and only then if not more than one or two copies are to be made of the original.

The reason for this is that not only is the reproduction quite poor at  $1\text{-}7\frac{7}{8}$  ips, there is a considerable amount of "noise" introduced into the recorded material (unless either the TANDBERG recorder or a noise reduction unit is employed). This "noise" that I have referred to is there even if you cannot hear it. Every time a copy is made a little more "noise" is added until you can hear it with no difficulty. After a while this "noise" starts to drown out the program material itself and when enough copies are made all that one can hear is this "noise". In case you have not guessed it by now, this noise is better known as tape hiss.

Contrary to popular opinion, once it is there, there is no way that it can be eliminated. If one uses the DOLBY NOISE REDUCTION UNIT he masks the hiss and it is not heard as long as the tape is played back through a similar unit. The DOLBY unit cannot take tape hiss out of a tape once it is there ! I know that many of you have been told to the contrary, but those who have given you this information are wrong.



No matter what speed you record at, you add a little bit of tape hiss every time that you make a dub (copy). The slower the speed the more the hiss. This is why most serious collectors use the 3-3/4 ips speed and in fact, some of them use 7 1/2 ips. Considering the quality of most of today's tape decks and also that most of the old radio programs do not have an extremely wide frequency range anyway, I can see nothing wrong with the 3-3/4 ips speed but I certainly would go no slower.

Cartridges are run at 7 1/2 ips at radio stations but the 4 and 8 track units are run at 3-3/4 ips. All three of these units utilize tape that is 1/4 inch in width the same as reel to reel tape and the fidelity of the 4 track units is as good as reel to reel tape. The fidelity of the 8 track units is very good but not quite as good as the fidelity of the 4 track units as the width of the tape is the same but there are 8 tracks of program information in the same space as the 4 tracks occupy. The narrower the track of information, the poorer the quality. Right about now I can hear a few of you saying boy this guy doesn't know what he is talking about. When they make the original recordings that have 8 and even 16 channels. That is correct but when this is done special machines are employed and tape that is much wider is used. I am not positive as to what width is used for these "master tapes" but I know that it is at least one inch.

At this point I must say that time is running short and Jay is waiting for this last page so as to "go to press". Seeing as I have a little more to say I will come to an end now and will continue and conclude this article next month.

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At this point I am back and must add that my company is <sup>now</sup> ~~now~~ about to start selling tape to collectors and at close to 50% off of the list price. There is not enough room here to list many prices but I will give you our "opening special" which is on AUDIO MAGNETICS tape. For a limited time only (and not even I know how long, it is up to A. M.) will can offer 1200 foot reels of Tensilized PVC tape for \$ 1.00 each, 1800 ft. tensilized PVC for \$ 1.21. Polyester 1800 ft. for \$ 1.46.

Audio Magnetics has now just come out with a LOW NOISE tape in a well made Plastic hinged box, special prices as follows: 1200 ft, polyester will be \$ 1.40. 1800 ft, Polyester will be \$ 2.00.

We will be stocking most brands of tape including among others: IRISH; SHAMROCK; CAPITOL; AUDIO-TAPE and DALTRONIX. For information you can write to : COMMUNITY TV SYSTEMS---P. O. BOX 3023---New Haven, Conn. 06515.

If you have any comments on this article please write to me directly as follows: MEL SHLANK--553 Howelton Road--Orange, Conn, ~~06477~~ 06477.

Sorry for the typing mistakes but Jay is waiting and this is being typed in a hurry. If you have any questions or comments I would sincerely like to hear from you so don't hesitate to write. I hope that you did not mind this "sneaky" commercial at the end. I really think that I can save most of you money. More on both aspects next month. In closing let me say that I left out that the above prices are all plus shipping. See you next month.